



25 April 2020

ANZAC DAY

For the Fallen

L. Binyon

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

In Flanders Fields

Dr. John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
between the crosses, row on row
that mark our place;
and in the sky the larks, still bravely singing, fly.
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead.
Short days ago we lived, felt dawn saw sunset glow,
loved and were loved, and now we lie.
In Flanders fields, in Flanders fields!
Take up your quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw the torch;
be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die.
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders fields, in Flanders fields.
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders fields in Flanders fields.

The Farmer Remembers the Somme

Vance Palmer

Will they never fade or pass!
The mud and the misty figures endlessly coming
In file through the foul morass,
And the grey flood-water ripping the reeds and grass,
And the steel wings drumming.
The hills are bright in the sun:
There's nothing changed or marred in the well-known places;
When work for the day is done
There's talk, and quiet laughter, and gleams of fun
On the old folks' faces.
I have returned to these:
The farm, and the kindly Bush, and the young calves lowing:
But all that my mind sees
Is a quaking bog in a mist
stark, snapped trees,
And the dark Somme flowing.

Hymn 46 (Based on Psalm 90)

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.

Under the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure:
sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
are like an evening gone:
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all its sons away:
they fly forgotten as a dream
dies at the opening day.

Our God , our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

A Personal Reflection

In 2005 June and I visited Villers Bretonneux where I understood my mother's father had died in battle and was buried. We did not find his grave but saw his name inscribed on the wall in the Memorial built there to honour the Australians who had died in the battles there. Captain Robert Armstrong Morgan 57th Infantry. In 2008 I was asked to present an address at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne as part of the Anzac events that year and, remembering the visit to Villers Bretonneux and the impact that that had made on June and I, I mentioned that visit and what little I knew of Captain Robert Armstrong Morgan (which was very little). I knew that he died there in battle on 25 April 1918 but that was about all. The central thrust of my address was that the vision of those who responded to the terrible but, as they then saw it, necessary call to arms in two world wars (and later conflicts) was a vision inspired by the values and loyalties of a community underpinned by Christian faith

and practice. I closed by saying that “in an age of rampant individualism the great signs and symbols of community must be re-affirmed with the clarion call to arms of yesteryear although in this day and age, please God, in the call to justice and peace and fulfilment for all.” In the face, now, of a rampant virus just what this means to a world turned upside down in so many ways demands whole new ways of managing community in the light of faith, especially as faith can no longer be assumed as in former days. Yet I would still want to affirm with one of the great pioneers of faith, St Paul, that “as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another”. (Romans 12:4-5)

But I digress. What my focus is on this Anzac Day is a grandfather and great grandfather whom I never knew but was to learn was one of three officers who led the counter attack at Villers Bretonneux on 24 and 25 April 1918; and so the German attempt to drive the Allied Forces out of France and Belgium was completely and finally thwarted and the end of the First World War was begun. After my address the Shrine historian approached me and said that I clearly had no understanding of the importance of my grandfather’s role in the battle on 25 April 1918 and the change in the course of the First World War in which he played a crucial part. She also alerted me to the account mentioning in detail Captain Robert Armstrong Morgan in CW Bean’s Official War History: 16 pages! in all.

In 2018 we went as a family to the 100th Anniversary Commemoration Service at Villers Bretonneux where we were privileged to officially present a wreath in honour of Captain Robert Armstrong Morgan.

This Anzac Day we will remember him especially as the Australian community at large marks this special day in Australia’s history without the usual plethora of commemorative events but by myriad individual personal acts of commemoration and reflection.

Yes. We will remember them.

Graeme Kerr